



Healing the Heart Through the Creative Arts, Education & Advocacy

Hope, Healing & Help for Trauma, Abuse & Mental Health

Out of suffering have emerged the strongest souls; the most massive characters are seared with scars. - Kahlil Gibran

Greetings folks,

We are sending you a heartfelt hello and good thoughts to all from the folks here at the Surviving Spirit.

Hopefully things are okay in your corner of the world and in your life – yet we are quite mindful that the nature of this newsletter is to help those impacted by trauma, abuse and mental health concerns, so sometimes there are ongoing dilemmas and crises to take care of. With that in mind, we are dedicating this issue to ***Caring for the Caregiver*** – that unsung person who goes out of their way to help their partner, friend, lover, spouse, family member and/or peer.

“Too often we underestimate the power of a touch, a smile, a kind word, a listening ear, an honest compliment, or the smallest act of caring, all of which have the potential to turn a life around.” - Leo F. Buscaglia

A well deserved round of applause goes out to each and everyone who takes on this task of helping others with love, compassion and caring despite all of the challenges it can present.

“Believe in yourself and all that you are. Know that there is something inside you that is greater than any obstacle.” - Christian D. Larson

We are very excited that Constance Chapman submitted a guest article for us to use with this month’s theme. Thank you Constance!!! Her topic covers the issues and concerns of a partner helping someone who has been sexually abused. But the issues and concerns of trauma, abuse and mental health are also applicable to this piece.

Constance Chapman, M.A. brings 30 years of experience helping women and men create lives and relationships filled with the joy and passion they desire. She brings a wealth of counseling skills from her many years of domestic violence non-profit experience, including crisis and trauma counseling, women centered counseling and critical inquiry skills. Constance has written and delivered ground breaking curriculum and training programs in this area.

“Caring for Caregiver”

When someone close to you is in recovery from sexual abuse, and the person asks or expects you to support them, there are several things you can do to provide that support and still maintain your own mental and emotional health.

A person who has been sexually abused may unconsciously seek out friends and partners who have their own woundedness, and this may be the basis of the relationship.

This was certainly true for me during my period of recovery. My partner had also been sexually abused as a child. When I started to remember and deal with the sexual abuse from my childhood, it brought up my partner's fears, and my partner ended up leaving during this time.

So, the first step in supporting someone in recovery is to know yourself, your limitations, and your triggers.

Second, set boundaries together. A person who has been abused has had their natural boundaries violated, and during times of stress (like recovery), the boundaries are going to be either highly rigid or seemingly non-existent. You need to know what you can legitimately do for the other and what you cannot. Be honest. The more agreements you can come to before the abused person gets deep into recovery, the more you will be able to negotiate his/her learning about healthy boundaries. And again, if you also have boundary issues, these will be activated during this time. You may need to have your own support system.

Third, remember that you are not responsible for the other person's healing. The best support you can give is to know that s/he is capable and believe in her/his ability to heal. If you see the person as a victim or as superhuman and treat her/him that way, you will be telling the person by your body language, your actions and your emotions that transformation is not possible.

If you love this person because of what you perceive as their weakness, if you were drawn to them because they appeared like a bird with one wing broken, then unless you change your attitude toward them, you will not be helping them.

On the other hand, if you were drawn to the person because s/he appeared totally together, as someone with no weaknesses, then you will be unconsciously telling the person that s/he cannot show the vulnerability that is needed to heal the past.

Finally, if you do agree to support someone during his or her recovery and find yourself resenting them, you have to willingly be honest. Honesty with self and others is the basis for all self-care. If you are not willing to be honest with yourself and others, then don't agree to support in the first place.

If your child is the one in recovery, have someone you can talk with about feelings of guilt, shame or denial that may arise for you. Regardless of the relationship between you and the recovering person, you can see this time as a gift for you to also grow and

change. Embracing this time as one with potential challenges outweighed by rewards of self-growth and a healthier relationship will give you the perspective to deal with the hard times.

Supporting someone during recovery can be a life affirming and sacred process for all concerned. It is like a birth. There will be times when you feel helpless to take away the pain of the woman in labor. There may be times when you would rather be dancing. There may be times when the woman in labor is screaming and blaming you for the contraction that is currently consuming her body. If you remember that women have successfully given birth for millennia, if you keep in mind that there is a beautiful baby at the end of the labor, and if you can remind the other that the pain and discomfort won't last forever, then the two of you will experience this as a sacred and positive journey.

"I feel the capacity to care is the thing which gives life its deepest significance." Pablo Casals

Constance has captured some of her incredible knowledge and extensive experience in her book, *"Am I Worth It? How to Turn Doubt Into YES Forever"*. You can find out more about her at www.mylovementor.com

Constance has helped to raise a lot of important issues and concerns that arise for the caregiver – here are some more helpful resources to help with all of this.

"As my sufferings mounted I soon realized that there were two ways in which I could respond to my situation - either to react with bitterness or seek to transform the suffering into a creative force. I decided to follow the latter course." - Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

1] We recently had the good fortune to review this valuable book that helps not only the caregiver, but the one being cared for – *"When Someone You Love Suffers from Posttraumatic Stress – What to Expect and What You Can Do"* – written by experienced trauma specialists Drs. Claudia Zayfert and Jason C. DeViva, this highly practical guide is packed with information, support, vivid stories, and specific advice. Readers learn to navigate the rough spots day by day and help their loved one find a brighter tomorrow.

The authors did a wonderful job in covering so many of the bases that need to be addressed when trying to help someone you care for who has been impacted by trauma – they focus on all areas of trauma and abuse, so it is a helpful resource for everyone.

"Traumatic stress can be a source of anguish, frustration, sadness, and fatigue in loved ones as well as trauma survivors. Therefore, our main reason for writing this book is to fill a gap and offer help specifically for family and friends of trauma survivors who want to understand the changes in their loved one and take better care of themselves. Research

has shown that when survivors of trauma have good social support, their chances of recovery improve.”

They also do a nice job of addressing the issue that hurts so many of us who have been impacted by trauma – ***do not blame them*** for how they are and what they are struggling with – they did not cause it and they just can't ***snap out of it*** or ***get over it*** – it takes time, healing, and support.

As mentioned, the authors did a really nice job in addressing so many of the concerns and issues for caregivers and for those they love – we did not agree with all of their viewpoints, but that is okay – as the saying goes, *“take what you like and leave the rest”*. It is a good resource and a valuable asset to have in your library.

Please visit <http://www.ptsd-book.com/> to learn more.

“Want of care does us more damage than want of knowledge” - Benjamin Franklin

“Never look down on anybody unless you're helping him up”. - Jesse Jackson

Here are a few more books and resources to help in Caring for the Caregiver.

2] *“Trust After Trauma – A Guide to Relationships for Survivors and Those Who Love Them”* by Aphrodite Matsakis, Ph.D

“This book helps guide you through a process of strengthening your existing bonds, building new ones (of your choice), and ending self-perpetuating cycles of withdrawal, isolation and loneliness. Step-by-step exercises help you learn how to manage your emotions, handle unresolved issues, accept realistic limitations, and find ways to make your relationships a place where you can experience healing from the pain of your past. A special section is devoted to grieving and your relationship to people whom you cherished but who are now dead as the result of the trauma.”

[On a personal note, this book helped me in so many ways, especially when it came to matters of the heart. Mike]

Aphrodite Matsakis has written a treasure trove of books for helping those impacted by trauma and abuse. To learn more please visit <http://www.matsakis.com/books.html>

3] *“Witness to Illness – Strategies for Caregiving and Coping”*, by Karen E. Horowitz and Douglas M. Lanes, M.D.

“This is a book for those of us who must, at some time in our lives, witness the illness of a significant other – a husband, wife, mother, father, sister, brother, or other family member, or friend – someone who is more than a statistic.”

<http://www.amazon.com/Witness-Illness-Strategies-Caregiving-Coping/dp/0201567962>

"Sometimes in tragedy we find our life's purpose - the eye sheds a tear to find its focus."
- Robert Brault

4] *"When a Parent Is Depressed – How to Protect Your Children From the Effects of Depression In the Family"* by William R. Beardslee, M.D.

http://www.amazon.com/When-Parent-Depressed-Children-Depression/dp/0316738891/ref=cm_cr_pr_product_top

Dr. William Beardslee directs the [Preventive Intervention Project at Judge Baker Children's Center and also the Prevention of Depression Study](#). He has served as the Academic Chairman of the Department of Psychiatry at Children's Hospital Boston and is the Gardner-Monks Professor of Child Psychiatry at Harvard Medical School. In 1998, Dr. Beardslee was appointed to the faculty at the Harvard Graduate School of Education.

5] [Preventing Caregiver Burnout: Tips and Support for Family Caregivers](#) [helpful website]

Some of the people most prone to burnout are caregivers – people who devote themselves to the unpaid care of elderly, chronically ill, or disabled family members. The demands of caregiving can be overwhelming, especially if you feel you have little control over the situation or that you're in over your head financially. Fatigue, frustration, and stress from caregiving can cause health problems, a strain on your other relationships, and eventually lead to the physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion that defines burnout.

If you're caring for a family member, it's essential that you get the support you need before burnout occurs. The good news is that you're not alone. There is help for caregivers available and ways for you to regain balance in your life.

"A good character is the best tombstone. Those who loved you and were helped by you will remember you when forget-me-nots have withered. Carve your name on hearts, not on marble." - Charles H. Spurgeon

6] From our good friends at [Gift From Within](#), comes this really helpful article.

[Partners With PTSD by Frank Ochberg, M.D.](#)

"I have suffered through many therapists that know squat about PTSD. All my "ah ha" moments have come from reading articles like yours and the few good books that are out there."

"I wish someone would write an article just for family members and friends that helps them to understand PTSD, and directly addresses their roles and responsibilities. They should have some, should they not?"

If you are a partner of someone with PTSD, I thank you for reading this. Somebody who relies on you wants you to appreciate and respect the condition that haunts them. With so

much in the popular press, on television and in movies that touches on trauma, it is easy to have partial information about traumatic stress, but to miss the full impact of this profound condition.

When I ask my patients, “Does your husband or wife or closest friend really understand?” I seldom hear a confident, “Yes they do!” And when a spouse or loved one does understand, I feel relieved. The prognosis for improvement goes up considerably. I have an ally.

So if you are that person - the partner who is willing to set aside preconception and take the time to learn about PTSD, thank you again for your attention.

Frank Ochberg is a psychiatrist and the former Associate Director of the National Institute of Mental Health and a member of the team that wrote the medical definition for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. He was the editor of America's first PTSD treatment text. Dr. Ochberg is the Founder of Gift From Within.

“So when you are listening to somebody, completely, attentively, then you are listening not only to the words, but also to the feeling of what is being conveyed, to the whole of it, not part of it.” - Jiddu Krishnamurti

7] Some helpful information for our caregiver friends...and for ourselves – it’s not *“all in our head”* –

[How child abuse affects both the body and mind](#) [after clicking on the link, scroll down a bit for the full article]

Since the 1980s, a tremendous amount of research has been done into the psychological impacts of child abuse; significant advances have also been made into a range of therapies for adults surviving child abuse. The focus on mental health, however, has meant little attention has been paid to the impact of physical illness in the lives of adult survivors.

Adults surviving child abuse are more likely to suffer from a range of physical health problems than other people. These illnesses include migraines, chronic pain, arthritis, chronic fatigue and irritable bowel syndrome. A recent survey of over 2500 older Australians with a history of physical and/or sexual abuse found that survivors were also more likely to suffer from three or more physical illnesses at once (Draper, Pirkis et al. 2008).

“Giving connects two people, the giver and the receiver, and this connection gives birth to a new sense of belonging.”- Deepak Chopra

We’d like to welcome two new folks to the Surviving Spirit family of caring people, author Jill Starishevsky and artist MaryAnn Goughler.

8] Jill has written the book [*"My Body Belongs To Me"*](#) with illustrations by Sara Muller.

As a prosecutor of child abuse and sex crimes in New York City for more than a decade, I have often encountered children who were sexually abused for lengthy periods of time and suffered in silence. One case in particular had a profound impact on me and compelled me to write this book.

"This sensitive, creative book about a very tough topic is a must-read for parents and their young children." - Ann Pleshette Murphy, Parenting Contributor, "Good Morning America."

You can learn more about Jill's work, her book and purchase it if you like at our [web store](#). We hope that Jill's book is added to the libraries of schools everywhere.

Jill and the young girl she helped appeared on this [Oprah Winfrey Show](#) – it reinforces how important it is to speak out and up and the power that it has to help others. The clip is three minutes long and it is well worth seeing.

9] MaryAnn is a self-employed, self-taught artist who has struggled with Schizophrenia. She's been married eighteen years to a wonderful man, has two dogs that help get her thru the day and she likes to offer support and hope to all those who suffer with mental health concerns while trying to lift the stigma attached to it. *"I love life, try to live it to the fullest and have lots of stories to tell."*

Please visit our [web store](#) to see her fine collection of art works.

"Kindness is the language which the deaf can hear and the blind can see." - Mark Twain

"Wherever there is a human being, there is an opportunity for a kindness." - Seneca

Thank you once again from all of us at the Surviving Spirit – to all of you who are doing what it is that you do to help address the issues and concerns of trauma, abuse and mental health – keep doing what you are doing, we are indeed making changes in helping others, and this in turn helps ourselves.

If you would like to write a guest article sometime or suggest a newsletter theme, please let us know.

Take care, Mike, Rachel, Lynn, Mary, Zsuzsi, Cynthia, & John

ps. Please share this with your friends & if you have received this in error, please let me know.

Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter.
~Martin Luther King, Jr.

A diagnosis is not a destiny

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"BE the change you want to see in the world." Mohandas Gandhi